

CLAIMS

1. A bearing assembly having at least two bearing elements spaced by a first body, the first body having means for flexing.  
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2. A bearing assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein, in use, when a load is applied to the bearing assembly the first body is caused to flex.  
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3. A bearing assembly as claimed in either of claims 1 or 2, wherein the flexing means comprise at least one groove or notch formed on the first body.  
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4. A bearing assembly as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the first body is substantially annular in shape, the at least one groove being formed on an outer surface of the first body.  
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5. A bearing assembly as claimed in either of claims 3 or 4, wherein the groove is substantially U-shaped.  
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6. A bearing assembly as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the first body is rigidly mounted to a body to which load is applied, in use.

7. A bearing assembly as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a first annular surface of the first body is provided with a first annular raceway.
- 5 8. A bearing assembly as claimed in claim 7, wherein a second annular surface of the first body is provided with a second annular raceway.
- 10 9. A bearing assembly as claimed in claim 8, wherein the first and second bearing elements each comprise a plurality of balls, the first and second bearing elements being received for movement within the first and second annular raceways of the first body.
- 15 10. A bearing assembly as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the means for flexing flexes about a longitudinal axis of the first body.
- 20 11. A bearing assembly as claimed in any of claims 4 to 10 when dependent upon claim 3, wherein the groove is provided substantially circumferentially around the first body.
- 25 12. A bearing assembly having at least two bearing elements spaced by a first body, the first body being at least partly flexible.

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13. A bearing unit comprising at least one bearing assembly according to any of claims 1 to 12.

14. A bearing unit as claimed in claim 13, wherein  
5 adjacent bearing assemblies are spaced by a second body.

15. A bearing unit as claimed in claim 14, wherein the second body is substantially annular in shape.

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16. A bearing unit as claimed in claim either of claims 14 or 15, wherein the second body is rigidly mounted to a further body to which load is not (directly) applied in use.

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17. A bearing unit as claimed in claim any of claims 14 to 16, wherein a first annular surface of the second body is provided with a first annular raceway.

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18. A bearing unit as claimed in claim 17, wherein a second annular surface of the second body is provided with a second annular raceway.

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19. A bearing unit as claimed in claim 18, wherein respective first and second bearing elements are received for movement within the first and second annular raceways of the second body.

20. A bearing unit as claimed in claims 13 to 19, wherein adjacent first bodies are spaced by a respective first spacer element.

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21. A bearing unit as claimed in claim any of claims 13 to 20, wherein adjacent second bodies are spaced by a respective second spacer element.

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22. A bearing unit as claimed in claim any of claims 13 to 21, wherein a further first spacer is provided between an end to which force is applied, in use and an adjacent end of an adjacent first body.

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23. A tool or apparatus including a bearing assembly according to any of claims 1 to 12.

24. A tool or apparatus including a bearing unit according to any of claims 13 to 22.

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25. A tool or apparatus as claimed in either of claims 23 or 24, wherein the tool is a down-hole tool, eg. for use in a borehole of an oil/gas well.

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26. A tool or apparatus as claimed in any of claims 23 to 25, wherein the tool comprises part of a borehole drilling apparatus, which optionally includes a down-hole motor.

27. A tool or apparatus as claimed in any of claims 23 to 27, wherein the/a first body is rigidly mounted to a shaft to which load is applied, in use.

5 28. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 27, wherein the shaft is contained substantially concentrically within the bearing assembly/unit.

10 29. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 24 or any of claims 25 to 28 when dependent upon claims 23, wherein the second body is rigidly mounted to a housing.

15 30. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein the housing is substantially concentrically surrounds the bearing assembly/unit.

20 31. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 24 or any of claims 25 to 30 when dependent upon claim 24 wherein adjacent first bodies are longitudinally spaced by a first spacer element.

32. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 31 when dependent upon claim 27, wherein the first spacer elements is/are mounted on the shaft.

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33. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 24 or any of claims 25 to 22 when dependent upon claim 24, wherein adjacent second bodies are longitudinally spaced by a

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second spacer element.

34. A tool or apparatus as claimed in claim 33 when dependent upon claim 29, wherein the second spacer elements is/are mounted on the housing.

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